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The Fall of Astyages and Herodotus' Chronology of the Eastern Kingdoms

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## ABHANDLUNGEN

### THE FALL OF ASTYAGES AND HERODOTUS' CHRONOLOGY OF THE EASTERN KINGDOMS

Few orientalists and fewer classicists have lost much sleep agonizing over the date of Astyages' defeat at the hands of Cyrus. But it will be worth the effort, I hope, to review in somewhat tedious detail our evidence for this date. Our conclusions will suggest some revision of our estimate of Herodotus' role in the development of historiography.

The conventional date<sup>1</sup> for Cyrus' victory, 550 B.C., has been discredited in recent scholarship.<sup>2</sup> This date was based on the Nabonidus Chronicle, apparently a fifth century document, which in annalistic fashion describes some *but not all* of the regnal years of Nabonidus, king of Babylon from June, 556 through October, 539. Of the original description of Astyages' fall only four lines are preserved:<sup>3</sup>

- (Col. II, line 1): (collected his army) and marched against Cyrus king  
of Anshan to (conquer him) and .....  
(2): Ishtumegu's army mutinied and he was captured, and  
they gave him up to Cyrus. ....  
(3): In Agamtanu Cyrus carried off silver, gold, chattels  
and possessions .....  
(4): of the land of Agamtanu, and took them to Anshan.  
The goods and chattels of .....  

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(5): In the seventh year the king (stayed) in Tema.

Since line 5 introduces the seventh year of Nabonidus, Sidney Smith supposed<sup>4</sup> that the notice of Cyrus' victory was included under Nabonidus' sixth year.

<sup>1</sup> Found in earlier definitive treatments (A. T. Olmstead, *History of the Persian Empire* [Chicago 1948], p. 37; G. B. Gray, *C.A.H.* IV, p. 7), and in most recent surveys of ancient history.

<sup>2</sup> K. Galling, „Von Naboned zu Darius. Studien zur chaldäischen und persischen Geschichte,“ *Zeitschrift des Deutschen Palästina-Vereins* LXIX (1953), pp. 42–64; E. Vogt, „Novae inscriptiones Nabonidi“ *Biblica* XL (1959), pp. 88–102; P. Sacchi, „La data della vittoria di Ciro su Astiage“ *La Parola del Passato* XX (1965), pp. 223–233.

<sup>3</sup> Translation of A. Leo Oppenheim, in *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament* (ed. J. B. Pritchard, Princeton, 1955), pp. 305–306. For the original text and drawings of the tablet see Sidney Smith, *Babylonian Historical Texts Relating to the Capture and Downfall of Babylon* (London, 1924), pp. 98–123 and plates xi–xiv.

<sup>4</sup> *Op.Cit.*, pp. 100–101.

The accession year of Nabonidus, 556/5, was designated as such, and his first official regnal year, 555/4, began when he took the hands of Marduk at the New Year festival. This festival, the first day of the month Nisanu, corresponded roughly to the vernal equinox. Thus the sixth year of Nabonidus ran from Nisanu, 550, to Nisanu, 549, and Cyrus' victory was placed in the summer of 550.

But there is no reason to assume that the Nab. Chron. dated Cyrus' victory to Nabonidus' sixth year. The left hand side of the tablet (obverse) is broken, and so we have no indication of regnal years listed in column I. The description of Cyrus' victory obviously began at the bottom of column I and was carried over to the top of II. But the bottom of the tablet is also broken. Two transverse lines in column I make it clear that the events there described belong to three different years. It is possible that the notice of Cyrus' victory was the last event described in the third of these entries. On the other hand, if the tablet's original length was considerably greater than that of our fragment, column I may have described more than three years. At any rate, the first two entries preclude the possibility that Cyrus' victory was dated by the Nab. Chron. to Nabonidus' accession year or to his first regnal year. We may conclude only that the chronicle dated the fall of Astyages to one of the years 554/3-550/49.<sup>5</sup>

The Nabonidus cylinder from Sippar<sup>6</sup> provides us with far more precise information. Here Nabonidus tells how he rebuilt Eḫulḫul, the sanctuary of the god Sin, at Harran. We are told that in his accession year<sup>7</sup> Nabonidus was approached in a dream by Marduk, who ordered him to rebuild Eḫulḫul. Nabonidus protested that the Medes controlled Harran.

But Marduk said to me: "The Umman-manda of whom you spoke, they, their country and (all) the kings, their allies, shall cease to exist!" (And indeed) when the third year came to pass, he (Marduk) made rise against them Cyrus, king of Anshan, his young servant, and he (Cyrus) scattered the numerous Umman-manda with his small army and captured Astyages,

<sup>5</sup> Sacchi, *Op.Cit.*, pp. 224-225, notes that the chronicle dated the defeat of the Medes to one of the years 554/3-550/49. But since he would like to date Cyrus' victory to 556, he argues that the chronicler is describing not the crucial victory of Cyrus over Astyages, but the end of all hostilities between Medes and Persians. Justin 1 7 is cited as evidence „che Ciro dovette combattere contro i partigiani di Astiage, anche dopo la cattura di quest'ultimo." But Justin says no such thing, and the chronicle clearly refers to Cyrus' victory over Astyages himself.

<sup>6</sup> Nabonidus, no. 1, in Stephen Langdon, *Die neubabylonischen Königsinschriften* (Leipzig, 1912), pp. 219-230.

<sup>7</sup> Column I, line 16, *ina ries sarru-u-ti-ia*, "in the head of my kingship." This is the technical term for the months between a king's accession and the beginning of his first official regnal year. See J. Finegan, *Handbook of Biblical Chronology* (Princeton, 1964), pp. 85 and 195.

king of the Umman-manda and brought him in fetters into his (Cyrus') land. That was the doing of the Great Lord Marduk whose command cannot be changed.<sup>8</sup>

We notice that Cyrus conquered the Medes "when the third year came to pass" (sa-lu-ul-ti satti ina ka-sa-du; literally, "in the third year, at its arrival"). This 'third year' may be understood as the third year after Marduk's prophesy (inclusive dating), or as the third official regnal year of Nabonidus. The cylinder, in other words, dates Cyrus' victory either to 554/3 or to 553/2.<sup>9</sup>

After the Medes had evacuated Harran, Nabonidus set about rebuilding Eḫulḫul. We hear how the king summoned workers from Akkad, Hatti, the borders of Egypt, from lands on the Mediterranean and lands on the Persian Gulf. On an auspicious day in an auspicious month work began, and the temple was constructed with cedars of Lebanon, and adorned with gold, silver, precious stones and animal statuary. Finally the god Sin was invited to take up his residence there.

The construction of Eḫulḫul, made possible by Cyrus' victory over the Medes, obviously took some time. While Nabonidus directed his energies toward restoration of the temple, he neglected his duties in Babylon. A verse account of Nabonidus' follies, written during the latter part of Cyrus' reign,<sup>10</sup> puts into Nabonidus' mouth the pledge "Until I complete this . . . I shall omit the festival, I shall cause the New Year feast to cease."<sup>11</sup> The poet, much out of sympathy with Nabonidus' obsession, goes on:

After he had obtained what he desired, a work of utter deceit,  
Had built (this) abomination, a work of unholiness  
– when the third year was about to begin –

<sup>8</sup> Column I, lines 26–34, translation of Oppenheim in the *Interpretation of Dreams in the Ancient Near East* (Philadelphia, 1956), p. 250. Sacchi puts the entire passage, with the exception of the last sentence, in the mouth of Marduk. Thus Cyrus' victory is revealed by Marduk as already won; and since Marduk is said to have made his pronouncement during Nabonidus' accession year, Cyrus can have defeated Astyages no later than 556/5. Sacchi's interpretation implies that Nabonidus was so unobservant that Cyrus' victory had completely escaped his notice. Gods in dreams customarily reveal the future, not the past.

<sup>9</sup> Sacchi, *Op. Cit.*, p. 227, contends that the phrase in question "perde per noi ogni valore," since Marduk neglected to give us a reckoning point to fix that 'third year'. It is quite true that if these are the words of Marduk, "in the third year, at its arrival" is meaningless. But if this is Nabonidus' own historical comment we need not indict Marduk for carelessness. Nabonidus had his own reckoning point – his *ries saru-u-ti-ia*. Smith, *Isaiah Chapters XL–LV* (London, 1944), p. 131, assigns the words to Marduk, interprets them as a prophesy, suggests that Marduk is speaking in a seldom used 'prophetic perfect' tense, and understands the 'third year' as referring to Nabonidus' third regnal year. The translation of Oppenheim is open to fewest objections.

<sup>10</sup> Smith, *Babylonian Texts*, pp. 83–91.

<sup>11</sup> Column II, lines 10–11.

He entrusted the "camp" to his oldest (son), the firstborn,  
 The troops everywhere in the country he ordered under his (command)  
 He let (everything) go, entrusted the kingship to him  
 And, himself, he started out for a long journey.  
 The (military) forces of Akkad marching with him;  
 He turned towards Tema (deep) in the west.<sup>12</sup>

Here we find the same phrase, "in the third year, at its arrival" (sa-lu-ul-ti satti ina ka-sa-du),<sup>13</sup> which occurred on the Sippar cylinder. Aware that Cyrus' victory and the construction of Eḫulḫul could not have occurred in the same year, Galling translated the phrase on the Sippar cylinder in the absolute sense, "at the beginning of the third (regnal) year (of Nabonidus)"; but assigned the same phrase in the verse account a relative meaning: two years after building Eḫulḫul Nabonidus made his son, Belsazar, commander of the troops. It would seem preferable to assign the phrase the same meaning in both instances. If in both cases the phrase cannot refer to the third regnal year, it must have a relative meaning in both cases. Such a relative meaning, on the Sippar cylinder, would indicate that two years after Nabonidus' dream (556/5) Cyrus conquered Astyages (554/3). The phrase in the verse account indicates that two years after the construction of Eḫulḫul Nabonidus made Belsazar commander of the troops. This conferral of power cannot have taken place any later than 550,<sup>14</sup> and so Eḫulḫul can have been completed no later than 552. In addition, there is evidence that the New Year festival of 553/2 was not celebrated.<sup>15</sup> That must mean that in Nisanu, 553, Nabonidus was already busy at Harran, that he began construction in 554/3, and that Cyrus' victory was won earlier in the year 554/3. The most probable date for the fall of Astyages is the summer of 554.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Column II, lines 16–24, translation of Oppenheim, A.N.E.T., p. 313.

<sup>13</sup> Reading proposed by Th. Bauer and B. Landsberger, „Zu neuveröffentlichten Geschichtsquellen der Zeit von Asarhaddon bis Nabonid“, *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie* XXXVII (1926), p. 91, and accepted by Smith, *Isaiah Chapters*, p. 131.

<sup>14</sup> The Nab. Chron. shows Nabonidus already at Tema in Nisanu, 549.

<sup>15</sup> Sacchi, *Op.Cit.*, 230–231, points out that according to a fragment published by E. Weidner (*J.S.O.R.* VI 1922, p. 199), during his third regnal year the king was in Babylon only for 13 days in the month of Aiaru.

<sup>16</sup> As we have seen, the Nab. Chron. and the Sippar cylinder do not date Cyrus' victory to 556. Sacchi interpreted these documents as he did in the hope that thus they might be brought into line with another inscription (Nab. 8, col. X, lines 16–21), on which his case ultimately rests. In this inscription Nabonidus says that Eḫulḫul lay in ruins for 54 years. Since Eḫulḫul had been destroyed in 610, Sacchi maintains that reconstruction must have *begun* in 556. But in these lines we read that it was Marduk's pleasure that after 54 years „Sin zurückkehren würde an seinen Platz“ (lines 20–21, Langdon's translation). In other words, Nab. 8 implies that Eḫulḫul was *completed* in 556. This contradicts all other evidence on the construction of Eḫulḫul. As Galling and Vogt point out, Nab. 8 identifies the *reign* of Nabonidus as the beginning

Cyrus was killed late in the summer of 530. As late as August 12, 530, Babylonian documents were being dated according to his regnal year.<sup>17</sup> By late August or early September of 530 news of his death had reached Babylon.<sup>18</sup> His death must have occurred a week or two prior to its announcement in Babylon, about 24 calendar years after his victory over Astyages.

The old Persian calendar, in use throughout Cyrus' reign, was based on the autumnal equinox. In terms of this calendar Cyrus perhaps defeated Astyages in 555/4 and died in the year 531/0. If 555/4 was counted as his first year, his death was placed in the 25th year of his rule over Medes and Persians. Because of the discrepancies between the Babylonian calendar and their own, the Persians discarded their old calendar and adopted a new one, based on the vernal equinox. But this change was not made until after Cyrus' death. In terms of the new calendar, Cyrus won his victory in 554/3 and died in 530/29. The year in which he died would have been designated as his last, and not as Cambyses' first regnal year.<sup>19</sup> Similarly, 554/3 should have been designated as Astyages' last, and not as Cyrus' first regnal year. Some of his subjects may have credited Cyrus with 25 regnal years, but most would undoubtedly have allowed him only the 24 calendar years which he did enjoy as king of the Medes and Persians.<sup>20</sup>

Was there no one in the Greek world who knew that Cyrus had been King of Kings for 24 years? An analysis of Herodotus' first book, with this question in mind, leads to some unexpected conclusions about Herodotus' chronology of the Eastern kingdoms and about his debt to earlier historians.

Herodotus says that Cyrus ruled τὰ πάντα for 29 years.<sup>21</sup> This implies that

of good relations with the neglected gods („Versöhnung der zürnenden Götter, ihnen Wohnung zu bereiten an ihren Wohnsitzen befahl [Marduk] mit seinem reinen Munde für meine Regierungszeit," Col. X, lines 8–11, Langdon's translation) and represented his accession in 556 as the equivalent of Sin's rehabilitation.

<sup>17</sup> R. A. Parker and W. H. Dubberstein, *Babylonian Chronology 626 B.C.–A.D. 75* (2nd edition, Providence, 1956), p. 14.

<sup>18</sup> Dubberstein, „The Chronology of Cyrus and Cambyses" *A.J.S.L.* LV (1938), pp. 417–419. Much new evidence has been found since Eduard Meyer reached his conclusion that Cyrus' death must be placed „frühestens in Frühjahr 528." Cf. Meyer, „Chronologische Untersuchungen," *Forschungen zur alten Geschichte*, vol. II (Halle, 1899), pp. 471–472.

<sup>19</sup> In Babylonian records the accession year of a king was counted as the last official regnal year of his predecessor. Similarly, Herodotus' informant for III 66–67 counted the year in which Cambyses died as his eighth, not as Darius' first regnal year.

<sup>20</sup> Apparently the Medes and Persians were not interested in precise figures for the reigns of their kings. The reigns of the Median kings are not recorded in Iranian documents. Herodotus' figures are not exact, but are used because we have nothing else. See R. Labat, „Kaštārīti, Phraorte et les debuts de l'histoire Mede" *Journal Asiatique*, 1961, pp. 1–12, and G. Huxley, „A War between Astyages and Alyattes" *G.R.B.S.* VI (1965), pp. 201–206. Ctesias said (f 9, 7) that Cyrus ruled 30 years.

<sup>21</sup> I 214, 3.

Astyages was deposed in the summer of 559. Herodotus was not aware that his figure included those years in which Cyrus was king of Anshan, and vassal of Astyages. Although there is no indication that Herodotus himself had heard a tradition that Cyrus' rule over τὰ πάντα lasted only 24 years, his general outline of Eastern chronology seems to presuppose the latter figure.

Herodotus was not deeply interested in the chronology of the Eastern empires, but there are statements on the matter scattered throughout his first book. These passages refer to the rule over all Asia, or to the empires of Lower Asia and of Upper Asia, and assume that the Halys river formed a more or less natural boundary between the two halves of Asia. Although in Herodotus' few lines on the Heraclids of Lydia nothing is said about the extent of their territory, we read in I 95, 2 that their contemporaries, the Assyrians, ruled τῆς ἄνω Ἀσίας for 520 years, and so we may regard the Heraclid Lydians as Assyria's counterpart in Lower Asia. The same situation obtained in the time of the Medes and the Mermnad kings of Lydia, "for the Halys river was the boundary of the Median *arche* and the Lydian *arche*. . . . The Halys river cuts off almost all τῆς Ἀσίας τὰ κάτω from the sea opposite Cyprus to the Euxine Sea."<sup>22</sup> The very same information, from the Median vantage point, is given in I 130, 1. The ephemeral Scythian empire was restricted to Upper Asia, and so ended at the Halys.<sup>23</sup> In the history of Croesus and his war with Cyrus, of course, the border is mentioned several times.<sup>24</sup> Herodotus' description of the Halys (I 95, 2) and his enumeration of the peoples living west of the river (I 28) are both faulty, and it seems clear that he had never seen the river. But in book I the Halys is consistently portrayed as the dividing line between Upper and Lower Asia.

Herodotus' chronology of the Eastern kingdoms presupposes that Upper and Lower Asia had been ruled by different dynasties until Cyrus defeated Croesus and made all of Asia subject to himself. The Halys had divided Croesus from Cyrus, the Mermnad predecessors of Croesus from the Medes, and the Heraclid Lydians from the Assyrians. Both the Assyrians and the Heraclids of Lydia traced their ancestry through Ninus, the eponymous founder of Nineveh, to Heracles.<sup>25</sup> Thus the unity of Asia, realized in the career of Cyrus, had been anticipated in the person of Ninus. We find the following chronological scheme in Herodotus' first book:<sup>26</sup>

<sup>22</sup> I 72, 3.

<sup>23</sup> IV 1. This is, however, contradicted in I 104, where Herodotus says that the Scythians ruled τὴν Ἀσίην πᾶσαν. <sup>24</sup> I 6, 1; I 28; I 75, 3.

<sup>25</sup> I 7, 2: "The ruler of Sardis, Candaules, whom the Greeks call Myrsilus, was a descendant of Alcaeus, son of Heracles. For Agron, the son of Ninus, son of Belus, son of Alcaeus, was the first of the Heraclid kings of Sardis, and Candaules, son of Myrsus, was the last."

<sup>26</sup> Heraclid Lydians, I 7, 4; Mermnad Lydians, I 14, 4, I 16, 1, I 25, 1, and I 86, 1; Assyrians, I 95, 2; Medes, I 130, 1; Cyrus, I 214, 3.

Lower Asia	Upper Asia
Heraclid Lydians: 505 years	Assyrians: 520 years
	Medes: 128 $\pm$ 28 years
Mermnad Lydians: 170 years	Cyrus: 29 years

The statement of the length of the Median *arche* is one of the most ambiguous in Herodotus' *History*: Μῆδοι δὲ ὑπέκυψαν Πέρσῃσι διὰ τὴν τούτου πικρότητα, ἄρξαντες τῆς ἄνω "Ἄλυος ποταμοῦ Ἀσίης ἐπ' ἕτεα τριήκοντα καὶ ἑκατὸν δυῶν δέοντα, παρὲξ ἧ ὅσον οἱ Σκύθαι ἤρχον. Aubrey de Selincourt translated the line, "Because of his (Astyages') harsh rule the Medes, who had been masters of Asia beyond the Halys for a hundred and twenty-eight years except for the period of Scythian domination, were forced to bow before the power of Persia." De Selincourt is only the last of a long line of translators who have thus rendered the line. The same understanding of the line may be found in the notes of editors from Stein to van Groningen. According to this common interpretation, the Median *arche* lasted for 100 years, since the Scythians, Herodotus tells us in I 106, 1, ruled Upper Asia for 28 years.

But it may be objected that the sentence means that the Medes had themselves ruled for 128 years, a figure which does not include the Scythian interlude; in other words, that 156 years elapsed between the beginning of the Median empire and the downfall of Astyages.<sup>27</sup> It can be demonstrated, in fact, that this is what the sentence says.

When Herodotus wished to say that Cyaxeres' forty year reign *included* these very same 28 years of Scythian rule he expressed himself unambiguously: μετὰ δὲ ταῦτα Κυαξάρης μὲν, βασιλεύσας τεσσεράκοντα ἕτεα σὺν τοῖσι Σκύθαι ἤρξαν, τελευτᾷ (I 106, 3). Had he intended to say that the 128 year Median *arche* included the years of Scythian rule he could have used σὺν again, or the preposition πλὴν which nobody could misunderstand. But if he wished to say that the Medes ruled for 128 years over and above the Scythian interlude his choice of words was not so easy. χωρίς might be understood as 'beside' or 'except for'. The preposition πάρεξ does not mean 'except for', 'including' or 'excluding', but 'aside from'. This meaning is clear if we examine other passages in which Herodotus uses the word. He wrote in I 14, 1 that most of the silver dedications at Delphi came from Gyges, and πάρεξ δὲ τοῦ ἀργύρου χρυσὸν ἄπλετον ἀνέθηκε. In II 31, 1 we read Μέχρι μὲν νῦν τεσσάρων μηνῶν πλόου καὶ ὁδοῦ γινώσκεται ὁ Νεῦλος πάρεξ τοῦ ἐν Αἰγύπτῳ ρεύματος το-

<sup>27</sup> The sentence has been so interpreted by H. Strasburger, "Herodots Zeitrechnung" *Historia* V (1956), p. 141, note 2, and by W. den Boer, "Herodot und die Systeme der Chronologie," *Mnemosyne* XX (1967), p. 52.

σοῦται γὰρ συμβαλλομένῳ μῆνες εὐρίσκονται ἀναισιμούμενοι ἐξ Ἐλεφαντίνης πορευομένῳ ἔς τοὺς αὐτομόλους. At VII 52 Xerxes reassures Artabanus that the Ionians will not side with the enemy, because they proved their loyalty during Darius' Scythian campaign; *πάρεξ δὲ τούτου* they are leaving their wives and children as hostages in Persian hands. Obviously, to translate *πάρεξ* in any of these passages as 'except for' makes nonsense of the thought. In addition to I 130, Powell's lexicon lists 25 passages in which Herodotus uses *πάρεξ*. Once the word means 'unlike'. Powell supplies 'besides, except' as alternative translations for the other 24. But in 16 of these passages 'except' would be nonsense. 'Besides' fares much better, but there are four passages in which that equivalent will not serve. 'Aside from' can stand in all 24 passages.<sup>28</sup> The adverbial *παρὲξ ἢ* is perhaps unique in Greek literature. If Bekker has correctly emended Pausanias VI 7, 4 we have a second example: *Δωριεῖ δὲ τῷ Διαγόρου παρὲξ ἢ Ὀλυμπίασιν Ἰσθμίων μὲν γεγονάσιν ὀκτὼ νῖχαι*. Here the meaning obviously is not 'except for', but 'aside from'. Taken together, a linguistic analysis shows that in I 130 the 28 years of Scythian rule are not included in the 128 years of the Median *arche*.

The common interpretation of the line rests not on linguistic bases, but on the fact that a 156 years total for the Median dynasty is inconsistent with Herodotus' figures for the individual Median kings.<sup>29</sup> The regnal periods attributed<sup>30</sup> to Deioces (53), Phraortes (22), Cyaxeres (40), and Astyages (35) total 150 years, not 156. So, it is argued, in I 130 Herodotus must be concerned not with the duration of the Median dynasty, but more precisely with that period of time in which the Medes did in fact control all Asia – the 128 years from Phraortes through Astyages. Deioces was omitted, we are to understand, because in his time the Medes were not yet masters of all Upper Asia. This line of reasoning is embarrassed by the fact that Phraortes, Cyaxeres and Astyages reigned not 128, but only 97 years. But this difficulty is overcome by another expedient – Herodotus confused the regnal periods of Deioces and Phraortes; it was Phraortes who ruled 53 years. The entire argument overlooks the fact that the Medes, in Herodotus' careful account, did not exercise hegemony over Upper Asia during the reign of either Deioces or Phraortes. The latter was disastrously beaten when he took on the Assyrians, and died in the battle.<sup>31</sup> It was not until Cyaxeres subdued the Assyrians that there was anything

<sup>28</sup> 'Except' can not stand in I 14, 1; I 192, 1; I 192, 3; II 4, 1; II 31, 1; II 168, 1; II 168, 2; III 91, 2; III 97, 5; III 117, 6; IV 82; V 31, 2; VII 52, 2; VII 87; VIII 2, 1; VIII 48.

<sup>29</sup> In addition to the notes of most editors, see W. How and J. Wells, *A Commentary on Herodotus*, vol. I (Oxford, 1928), Appendix 3, pp. 383–384, and M. Miller, "Herodotus as Chronographer" *Klio* XLVI (1965), p. 121.

<sup>30</sup> Deioces, I 102, 1; Phraortes, I 102, 2; Cyaxeres, I 106, 3; Astyages, I 130, 1.

<sup>31</sup> I 102, 2.

resembling a Median *arche* over Upper Asia (and even then the entire Levant remained unconquered). Herodotus says expressly in I 103, that it was Cyaxares who subdued all Asia beyond the Halys. According to Herodotus' narrative of events, this rather incomplete Median *arche* of Upper Asia could not have lasted any longer than 47 years! I 130, obviously, betrays a far more simplistic view of Near Eastern history, and is not consistent with information which Herodotus gives us elsewhere in book I. We can not rescue the situation by inverting the reigns of Deioces and Phraortes. And so disappears the only argument for translating I 130 as it has so often been translated. The line should be rendered, "Because of his harsh rule the Medes bowed to the Persians, after ruling Asia beyond the Halys river for 128 years, aside from that period in which the Scythians ruled." The 128 year Median *arche* does not include the 28 year Scythian *arche*. Between the accession of Deioces and the fall of Astyages 156 years had elapsed.

In view of the other difficulties in I 130 it is not surprising to find that the implication of a 156 year Median dynasty is inconsistent with the 150 year total which results when we add together the figures which Herodotus gives us for the reigns of the individual Median kings. I 130 resembles those passages in book I in which a summary statement is made concerning the length of the Heraclid and Assyrian dynasties.<sup>32</sup> Herodotus did not himself add together the regnal periods of the Heraclid and Assyrian monarchs to arrive at the respective totals of 505 and 520 years. There is no indication, in fact, that Herodotus knew even the names of more than one Heraclid and two Assyrian kings, other than those mentioned in the genealogy in I 7. Either he found somewhere the figures 505 and 520, or he arrived at them by a mathematical process other than addition.

From all that we know about Herodotus, it should be conceded readily that he did not invent 'facts'.<sup>33</sup> He tells us that there had been 22 Heraclid and five Mermnad kings of Lydia, and we may assume that he *received* this information. There must have been various traditions about the length of the whole period from Agron, grandson of Heracles' grandson, through Croesus. This period would naturally have been calculated on the basis of generations. There were 27 kings of Lydia, and if four generations equal one century, these 27 kings ruled for 675 years.<sup>34</sup> There was also a tradition in Delphi, and perhaps

<sup>32</sup> I 7, 4: 'Ηρακλειῖδαι . . . ἄρξαντες ἐπὶ δύο τε καὶ εἴκοσι γενεᾶς ἀνδρῶν, ἕτεα πέντε τε καὶ πεντακόσια; I 95, 2: 'Ασσυρίων ἀρχόντων τῆς ἁνω Ἀσίας ἐπ' ἕτεα εἴκοσι καὶ πεντακόσια.

<sup>33</sup> Mrs. Miller (Op.Cit., pp. 121-126) asks us to believe that Herodotus arbitrarily set 23 years as the standard length of a 'weak' generation, and 39 years as the length of a 'strong' generation. Thus he multiplied the 22 weak Heraclids by 23, subtracted one year, and came up with the figure 505; he multiplied the four strong Mermnads by 39 to arrive at the figure 156; the 520 years of strong Assyrian rule represent  $13\frac{1}{3} \times 39$ .

<sup>34</sup> Herodotus allotted three generations to the century in II 142, 2, but others allotted four. Extraordinary scholarship may reveal that the Greeks employed a 39 or a 23

in Sardis, that the Mermnads had ruled for 170 years. If a historian knew that the Heraclids and Mermnads together had ruled 675 years, and that the Mermnads accounted for 170 of these years, he could calculate the Heraclid dynasty at 505 years.

The 520 year Assyrian *arche* could have been fixed in the same way. Granted that the Assyrian dynasty was founded by Ninus, Agron's father, it follows that the dynasties of Upper Asia had ruled for one generation longer than the dynasties of Lower Asia. In other words, the kings of Upper Asia, from Ninus through Cyrus, reigned 700 years. If it was known that Cyrus had ruled for 24, and the Medes for 156 years, an historian could set the Assyrian *arche* at 520 years.

Only Croesus and Cyrus could provide the synchronistic foundation for this schematic chronology. Some people recalled that Cyrus burned Croesus on the pyre, others remembered that Croesus survived Cyrus and travelled to Egypt with King Cambyses. But all would admit that Croesus and Cyrus were contemporaries. It was not known, as Herodotus did not know, in what year of his reign Cyrus had deposed Croesus.<sup>35</sup>

The following chronological system emerges:

Lower Asia		Upper Asia	
Croesus:	14 years	Cyrus:	24 years
first four Mermnads:	156 years	four Medes:	156 years
22 Heraclids:	505 years	(23) Assyrians:	520 years
<hr/>		<hr/>	
27 kings	675 years	(28 kings)	700 years

But, as we have seen, Herodotus did not know that Cyrus ruled Upper Asia for only 24 years. Nor did his own figures for the individual Median kings total 156 years. Therefore, although he may have deduced the length of the Heraclid dynasty, Herodotus could not have constructed the scheme as a whole. He found it somewhere, and made use of it from time to time. It did not agree with other traditions about the regnal periods of the Medes and Cyrus, but Herodotus was not aware of this.

In summary, Herodotus' Lydian chronology rests ultimately on a genealogical chronology in which the generation was defined as a quarter of a century. The same chronological scheme, if it incorporated the tradition that Cyrus died 24 years after defeating Astyages, was the source of Herodotus' figures for the

year generation, but the Greeks themselves recognized 25 years as a possible definition of a generation. Hesychius, s.v. γενεά: τὴν δὲ γενεάν ὑφίστανται ἑτῶν οἱ μὲν κ, οἱ δὲ κέ, οἱ δὲ λ'. Censorinus, De die natali 17, 2: Hoc quidem γενεᾶς tempus alii aliter definierunt. Herodius annos quinque et viginti scribit dici γενεάν, Zenon triginta.

<sup>35</sup> Strasburger, Op.Cit., pp. 137-138.

Assyrian and Median dynasties. The unavoidable conclusion would be that Herodotus found this scheme in the work of one of his predecessors.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> In a general study of the Greek accounts of Near Eastern history I hope to review Herodotus' sources of information on eastern history. Meyer, "Herodots Chronologie der griechischen Sagengeschichte," *Forschungen zur alten Geschichte*, vol. I (Halle, 1892), p. 176, suggested that Herodotus' chronological data on the Heraclid Lydians and the Assyrians may have been taken from the work of Dionysius of Miletus. Dionysius is such a shadowy figure that Meyer's suggestion can be neither refuted nor accepted. Max Pohlenz, *Herodot* (Leipzig, 1937), p. 21, classified Dionysius with "den Phantomen, die sich von Zeit zu Zeit die Altertumswissenschaft aufbaut, um einen leeren Raum ihres Gebietes auszufüllen." We may leave Dionysius in that company, but with the realization that Herodotus was not the first to concern himself with the chronology of the eastern kingdoms.